

Good afternoon,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts regarding working for Sorenson Video Relay Service as a video relay interpreter (VRI).

One of the most important aspects of sign language interpreting is the human component. Establishing a rapport with a client is extremely beneficial to the whole of the interpreting assignment, no matter how long or short in length. While VRIs and their deaf clients are not afforded the same amount of time to interact as with an in-person interpreting assignment, it is vital that we are able to take at least a few moments to establish that we are humans and not simply machines doing a job. We are not text relay operators; we are accustomed to working face-to-face with our clients for whom we are interpreting. I cannot stress enough the importance of not placing VRIs in the same category, with the same expectations, restrictions and limitations as those imposed on text relay operators.

While many of our "assignments" (i.e. phone calls) last, at times, only moments, the human element is there by way of visual contact and we must be allowed to be human beings while interpreting the calls. This means that a call may take a few short moments longer than a text relay call because we are not faceless "machines" simply facilitating the use of a product -- and we are absolutely not simply "dial tones."

I would like to take this opportunity to strongly encourage the FCC to visit a call center before making any further decisions that could potentially be a detriment not only to the deaf community as a whole, but to the field of sign language interpreting as well. By taking the time to actually see this incredible service in action, I remain hopeful that the FCC will understand fully what a VRI does, and why it is imperative that we are not placed in the same category as text relay operators.

My work as a sign language interpreter has been and will continue to be a privilege. Further, it is with great pride I am able to say I work as a Sorenson video relay interpreter.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my comments.

Sincerely,
Maureen Walton
Holt, MI